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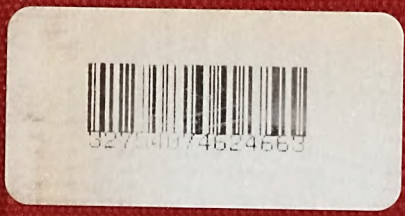

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CONTENTS

NATION STUDY. BY PROFESSOR SIR BERNARD PARES

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS GIVEN AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON, ON FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 1933

NOTES AND NEWS

Subscriptions to the "Modern Language Review" for 1934 (members, 15s.; non-members, 25s.), payable in advance, are now due, and should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, M.H.R.A., Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Particulars of the Association, its work and publications, will be found inside the front cover.

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THE YEAR'S WORK IN MODERN LANGUAGE STUDIES. Vol. I. (1929–30); Vol. II. (1930-31); Vol. III. (1931-32). See announcement on back cover.

OTHER INFORMATION. A prospectus of the M.H.R.A. and any other information required may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Prof. William C. Atkinson, The University, Glasgow.

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NATION STUDY

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS FOR 1933

By Professor Sir Bernard Pares

It is a great gratification to me that Professor Robertson is in the Chair. He has been one of the best friends of Slavonic Studies in London University. When I came here there was a vast Board of Mediæval and Modern Languages which moved round to different colleges for its various meetings and had far too much work to do. It was Professor Robertson who, as the very able Chairman of this Board, asked the University that Slavonic Studies should have a Board of their own, and this helped enormously the expedition with which we were able to draw up our courses and regulations. Our University has now six different language boards, each of them able to concentrate on its own tasks, and this is the work of Professor Robertson.

The study of foreign nations has always been one in which the English mind was capable of peculiarly good work. To take my own field—Russia. The *Russe-Commonwealth* of the admirable Giles Fletcher and the reminiscences of Sir T. Horsey are found invaluable as objective and shrewd evidence in the historical studies of Russian universities; and later in our own time Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace's great book on *Russia* is almost a compendium of the main objects of study for those who have followed him.

On the other hand, the study of Russian in British Universities lagged far behind. I would venture to say that up to our own days, though there were most distinguished individual English historians of foreign countries, there was no such thing as a real school of history. As to Russia, Professor Morfill of Oxford, who was practically alone at his time, was a great student of Slavonic philology and a very interesting writer on some subjects of

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Russian literature, but his short history of Russia was that of a literary critic and not of a historian. He, however, left behind him an admirable successor in his pupil, Professor Nevil Forbes, my own most valued colleague, who did very much to bring the Slavonic languages and literatures under the canons of university work as already established in other subjects.

It was fortunately before the late War that we began to issue from that "splendid isolation" into which we had retired under Queen Victoria, when Gilbert's suggestion that as a matter of course Utopia copied England instead of England Utopia could be taken without a smile. Interest in our Empire, promoted so actively by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, naturally implied as a corollary an interest in other countries which were our rivals. A whole number of serious students began to appear—Bodley and Miss Betham Edwards brought France nearer to us, Headlam Morley did excellent work on Germany, and Bolton King and George Trevelyan on Italy. In this new output Russia came almost first with Wallace's great book, and the lines which he charted have been followed up in much greater detail by his successors. It is the privilege of Russia to attract the best British minds. There was Harold Williams, the greatest Russian scholar whom we have ever possessed or are likely to possess, knowing forty different languages or sub-languages before he was forty, handling them with an astonishing ease and holding the keys to a number of remote but charming literatures. There was Maurice Baring, who got a juster and deeper understanding of the Russian mind than any other Englishman and perhaps than any other foreigner. There was Arthur Ransome, who found in Russia the most attractive of all fields for his study of folklore.

It was still a question how all these studies could be brought within the scope of university work. I am proud to see in this room the man who has done more than anyone else to promote university study of foreign nations in England: Sir Stanley Leathes, one of the editors of the *Cambridge Modern History*, who was for a long time at the head of the Civil Service Commission. He has fought throughout his life for these studies, and the charter for them is to be found in the report of the Prime

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Minister's Committee or 1918, published at the Stationery Office under the title "Modern Studies." This committee was first instituted by Mr. Lloyd George to find out why we were so ignorant of foreign languages, but it obtained permission to extend its investigations to the study of foreign countries; it came to a number of authoritative conclusions or great value and several very definite and practical recommendations were adopted, to which among others I consider that the School of Slavonic Studies, of which I am Director, largely owes its existence. This School was founded in 1915 by another great promoter of nation study, Dr. Ronald Burrows, then Principal of King's College, London. I might add that similar work was at the same time being done at Harvard University by Professor Archibald Coolidge, to whom I think it is more due than to anyone else that the American delegation at the Treaty of Versailles was able to give such wise direction and detail to the very great influence which at that time it naturally possessed as almost a kind of external arbiter.

The report on Modern Studies follows throughout certain clear and intelligent lines. Let me sketch some of the main outlines of nation study as there developed and as it has been practised since in special schools like my own.

To start with, we consider that there has been a widespread misunderstanding as to the different uses to which language study may be put. It may be one of two quite different things. Language may be either a subject in itself (which we call philology) or a means to the study of some other subject than language. It is all-important to make this clear distinction at the outset. For instance, there is no need whatsoever for a student of Russian economics to bother himself with Church Slavonic, or even with Old Russian, and it would only be a sheer waste of his time. Such a student may, if compelled, learn to repeat some parrot-like grammatical distinctions, but would no doubt forget them as soon as possible afterwards.

If language is only to be an instrument, it should be taught as such; and the test should be the ability to handle it correctly. This is normally a work which should be done in secondary schools; but the force of circumstances has compelled universities

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to spend most of the time of study on this, because without it one cannot go further to anything else.

When we speak of the proper fields of university study, we may outline them as four; and I may say that in ten years' experience I have found this distinction to work where Slavonic studies are concerned. We recognize four higher subjects: philology, literature, history and economics. The order in which we put them is important; they are like a kind of map. Interviewing students when they start work in our School, I find that each is able sooner or later to find his place on this map. He may be half-way between philology and literature; he may still more often be half-way between literature and history; he may be half-way between history and economics; but he cannot, for instance, be half-way between philology and economics. Another of my own ways of helping the student to find his proper destination is to ask him to assume that he had won distinction in his study and to make a bold guess at what might have been the title of his first book. He may, for instance, say it would be something on Turgenev. I then ask whether it would deal with Turgenev as a great literary artist or as a student of the social history of his time, and if he can answer that question I shall know exactly what instruments he requires to equip himself for his study.

Up till now language departments in universities have dealt only with language and literature. In our case, while following the more or less established lines in these subjects, we make our courses branch off half-way into separate options. Each such student has to use the language as an instrument; he must study the history both of the language and of the literature; but whereas the specially philological student will proceed to comparative philology, the one who prefers literature must substitute the history of literary criticism.

So far we were not doing anything new, but the study of foreign history and economics was almost a complete innovation, though the necessity for it has been made amply apparent through our pitiful want of equipment in this respect in the World War. Out of ten students of language one might almost say that nine

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are more ordinarily interested in the country than in the language. For these, too, the highest standard must be insisted upon in an accurate use of the language; and of course fully adequate provision must be made separately for those who study it as a basis for philology. Even among the students of literature, many are really more interested in the country than in the language, as I have indicated in the little distinction which I have made with reference to Turgenev. But I should say that most of all are interested in the history of the country, which should include of course a knowledge of the literature as one of its social expressions, and a growing number are interested in economics.

We have, therefore, created an honours course in history and economics in this University. Half-way through the course options are provided to meet the two different preferences. All have to study the history, the economic history and the laws and institutions; but whereas the historian also makes a study of the social literature and concentrates in particular on a special period, the economist substitutes a knowledge of economic geography of the country concerned and concentrates on one of the four recognized branches of economics in a Russian university, which are agriculture, industry, transport and finance. It will be seen at once what an advantage the student of this subject will have obtained if he enters the consular or diplomatic service.

I have to say that during the War the work of various embassies and legations had largely to be done by casual experts from outside, in the absence of a knowledge even of the language among the ordinary diplomatic attachés, and that when the War broke out it was found that a large number of our vice-consular posts were held by Germans. I only mention these details as obvious evidence of our lack of the necessary knowledge.

The principles which I have outlined at once found acceptance with our Government authorities and also with the business world. Clearly a business firm has little interest in the possession by one of its junior officials of a knowledge of Church Slavonic; clearly it will lose very much if he is entirely ignorant of the history and economics of the country in which he serves. It was not surprising, therefore, that the development of Slavonic studies

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in British universities has been due in the first place to big men of business and in particular to the initiative of Chambers of Commerce; such was the case in Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, and Sheffield. On the Government side, Sir Edward Grey, as he then was, arranged for official consideration of a memorandum from the School of Russian Studies in Liverpool University urging the extension of the special preparation for the consular service to that vast *terra ignota*, the Slavonic world. Unfortunately our attention to this subject came too late; for it was by that time hardly more than a year before the outbreak of the World War.

Since the War, not only in Slavonic but in other foreign studies, steps have been taken by the universities on the lines of Sir Stanley Leathes' report of 1918. Oxford and more particularly Cambridge have lightened the general enforcement of philology, and have included in their subjects of instruction the history and culture of foreign countries. In the University of London the Board of Teutonic Studies has introduced into its curriculum a study of German history or of German philosophy, and similar ideas are fermenting among teachers of Spanish. There are also active inquiries in the business world as to the possibility of including the teaching of the history and economics of foreign countries in the university programmes.

It is obvious that the good work already done in universities in this direction cannot take its proper effect without a great improvement in the provision of foreign languages in secondary schools, for the student has to spend half his time at the university in learning the language—which, as I have said, should be a subject of secondary school teaching. How will he be able to go on to the further subjects which I have described—in other words, to the honours course—if he goes up to a university without any knowledge of the language in question? During the War there was a great move for the wider study of foreign languages, and notably, among others, of Russian. When the War broke out, I was the only university professor of Russian in the country; there are now chairs of Russian in several other universities, and heads of departments in most of the rest. During the War several of the big

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public schools introduced the teaching of the language. Eton, I believe, actually included a Russian item in the programme of their Speech Day. All this has stopped at the present time. After a careful inquiry I have found only two schools in Great Britain which give regular instruction in Russian. Thus we are again heading straight for that position of impotence which had such deplorable results for us in the World War. At present French has in our secondary schools a larger number of pupils than all other languages combined, including Latin. No one can say anything to deprecate our study of French ; but we ask for German, Spanish, and Russian at least such attention as will lead to the formation of adequate honours schools in the universities. For Russian we claim only that in the neighbourhood of the universities there should at least be a few schools where this subject can be taught. German and Spanish may claim even more. It is on our attention to these needs that depends and must depend our ability to hold our own, whether in world politics or in world commerce.

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NOTES AND NEWS

We record with the deepest regret the death on May 28, 1933, of Professor J. G. Robertson. Known first as German scholar and as founder and editor of the *Modern Language Review*, Professor Robertson became closely identified with the Modern Humanities Research Association from the date of taking over of the *Review* as the Association's official journal, in 1922, and gladly spent himself in this still wider field of service to modern language scholarship. For many years, until his death, he was its Chairman of Committee; his presidential address for the year 1924-5 on "The Reconciliation of Classic and Romantic" was perhaps the most profound in the series, and is still in demand from all over the world; and he presided over the Address printed in this issue. His friends remember a quiet manner and a quiet voice that yet carried over a surprising distance. As much may be said of his work.

Professor C. J. Sisson, long English Editor of the *Review*, becomes General Editor, and Professor W. E. Collinson, of the University of Liverpool, takes charge of Germanic. The Committee counts itself fortunate to be able to record these appointments, and is confident that the prestige of the *Review* will remain as high in the future as it has been in the past.

In the need for economy that still weighs heavily on the Association a modification has been made in secretarial arrangements affecting members in the United States. Subscription reminders will there be sent out in future along with those of the Modern Language Association of America on January 1 instead of on October 1, and all publications will be despatched from England. This may mean some slight delay in receipt of

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the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, normally published in November, but, it is hoped, no other inconvenience, provided members pay their subscriptions promptly. The *Bibliography* and the *Year's Work in Modern Language Studies* (still, it need scarcely be said, in urgent need of increased sales) will henceforth go out in stout cardboard containers, which should both obviate all risk of damage and lessen that of loss in transit.

Sir William A. Craigie, of the University of Chicago, has accepted the invitation of the Committee to serve as President for the current year. The Presidential Address will be delivered, probably in Chicago, at a date and on a theme to be announced later.

We acknowledge with thanks receipt of the following contribution to the Capital Fund:

Dr. H. J. Chaytor, 10s. 6d.

And of the following publications:

P.M.L.A., vol. xlviii. 1933.

Bibliografía de la Novela Mejicana. By A. Torres-Rioseco. Harvard and Oxford University Presses. 1933.

A Bibliography of Cuban Belles-Lettres. By J. D. M. Ford and M. I. Raphael. Harvard and Oxford University Presses. 1933.

Amelia Alderson Opie: Worldling and Friend. By M. E. Macgregor. Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, xiv., 1-2. Northampton, Mass.

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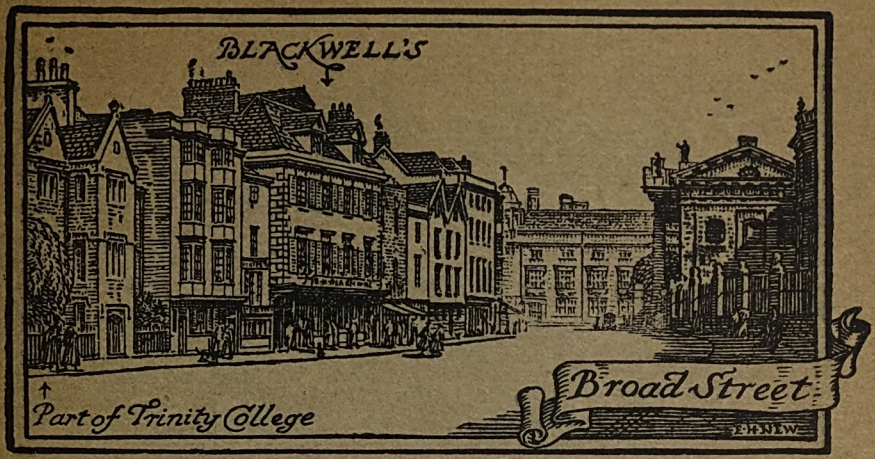

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Edited for the Modern Humanities Research Association by

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Professor of Spanish Studies in the University of Oxford

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